

## This I believe

I believe in anti-elitism.

At a certain stage of your life, you would surely have been classified in a certain tier for a certain ability. Anyway, humans are inevitably different in ability. But that's okay. To me, what is wrong, is when you capitalize on the difference and be biased to the 'higher ability elites', in the process robbing the masses of opportunities, attention and even their rights. This is what happens in the practice of Elitism.

What got me aware of Elitism is probably the results-based society I live in. At the age of 10, when all exams meant to me was a set of torture tools directed at my nervous system, I was ruthlessly streamed into either the mainstream, or into the Gifted Education Program. And sadly, so began my life of being judged, classified and streamed.

Gifted Education Programme? What are the definitions of the adjective 'gifted' that differentiated one's life from the other? The assessments to be done were English and Mathematics. Well, these happened to be the two subjects I was worst at, of course I would not be 'gifted'. What if they tested Chinese, my best subject? Would I then be an 'elite' too?

I think the basic right of all children is to receive an education. An education no more, or no less, than the education authorities deem right only for the elites among the students to get. However, because of Elitism, many chances to competitions, symposiums, immersions etc are often offered to the 'Gifted'. Ever thought that the 'dimmer' students might be more interested? Once, there was a competition where I knew of a classmate who was qualified and keen to go. However, before we even knew the application started, the school representative had already been chosen from the top class. And what could my disappointed classmate do? As her friend, I was sad for her, and wished that we would at least had been able to fight for the chance for her. It should be every student's right to have a shot at learning opportunities.

A fundamental consequence, that really becomes a driving force of Elitism, is the snowball effect. The best tends to get supplied with the best materials. Two years ago, I felt hurt and angry after hearing from my friend in the gifted class that she got to learn philosophy and study extra things in class. This way, the best just gets better, while the rest hardly improve. I might just have the ability to learn all those too. The difference between me, a mainstream student, and the 'gifted', was just 2 marks of another one-time assessment, the PSLE.

This is what I see as a 15 year old child and student. This is not what I hope to see trap many more years of 15 year old students. I am a believer of anti-elitism. Sad to say though, like a parasite, I have thrived on Elitism, but also, like the host, be a

victim of it. However, I believe this phenomena and system that we students live in should change, can change, and will change.